

Message Text

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12

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 SAM-01 SAJ-01 DRC-01 /106 W

----- 078214

R 010650Z MAR 74

FM AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1502

INFO AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY HELSINKI

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

UNCLAS STOCKHOLM 850

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PGOV, SW

SUBJECT: SWEDEN ADOPTS NEW CONSTITUTION

1. RIKSDAG FEB. 27 GAVE FINAL PASSAGE TO SWEDEN'S NEW CONSTITUTION. THUS, THE OLDEST EUROPEAN CONSTITUTION, DATED 1809, GOES OUT OF FORCE, AND NEW CONSTITUTION WILL TAKE EFFECT JAN. 1, 1975.

2. THERE WAS LIVELY AND SOMEWHAT SURPRISING DEBATE IN THE RIKSDAG, IN MEDIA AND AMONG THE GENERAL PUBLIC DURING THE LAST SEVERAL WEEKS AS LONG PROCESS OF ADOPTION DREW TO AN END. BUT THERE WAS NEVER ANY DOUBT OF OUTCOME, AS THE PARTIES, AFTER 20 YEARS OF DISCUSSION, HAD LONG SINCE AGREED ON ITS PROVISIONS.

3. FINAL VOTE APPROVING NEW CONSTITUTION, PRECEDED BY SEVEN HOURS OF SPEECHMAKING AND ONE BOMB THREAT (IGNORED), WAS 321 AGAINST 19, WITH TWO ABSTENTIONS AND EIGHT MEMBERS NOT PRESENT. VOTING AGAINST WERE 18 LEFT COMMUNISTS (VPK) AND THE MODERATE RIKSDAG MEMBER, COUNT HANS WACHTMEISTER, WHO WAS IN OPPOSITION TO THE

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REDUCTION OF THE POWERS OF THE KING. ABSTAINING WERE

TWO RIGHT-WING MODERATES.

4. NEW CONSTITUTION IS NO GREAT CHANGE OVER OLD INSTRUMENT WHICH HAD BEEN AMENDED VERY OFTEN. MAIN CHANGE IS THAT AS OF 1975 THE KING LOSES MOST OF HIS MODEST POLITICAL POWER, ESPECIALLY HIS ROLE IN FORMATION OF NEW GOVERNMENT. THESE POWERS ARE HENCEFORTH VESTED IN THE SPEAKER OF THE RIKSDAG. POWER OF THE SINGLE-CHAMBER RIKSDAG IS SOMEWHAT STRENGTHENED AT EXPENSE OF GOVERNMENT AGENCIES PARTICULARLY IN FIELD OF TAXATION. TAKING EFFECT IMMEDIATELY IS LOWERING OF VOTING AGE TO 18 YEARS AND CHANGING NUMBER OF RIKSDAG SEATS FROM 350 TO 349.

5. NOT INCLUDED IN NEW CONSTITUTION IS A BILL OF RIGHTS, WHICH DISTURBS MANY. A COMMISSION HAS BEEN SET UP TO STUDY ISSUE ORDERED TO PRESENT ITS REPORT NOT LATER THAN THE FIRST HALF OF 1975, WHICH MEANS THAT A BILL OF RIGHTS COULD ENTER INTO FORCE IN 1977, AFTER APPROVAL BY TWO CONSECUTIVE RIKSDAGS (1975 AND 1976) WITH AN INTERVENING ELECTION (1976).
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